

**DATE:** April 27, 2026

**REPORT NO:** LLS-04-2026

**SUBJECT:** **Regional Governance Review – Bill 100 (Better Regional Governance Act, 2026)**

**CONTACT:** Jessica Dyson, Director, Legal and Legislative Services  
Truper McBride, CAO

**OVERVIEW:**

- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced the *Better Regional Governance Act, 2026* which proposes to changes to the governance structure of Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Simcoe, Waterloo, and York including:
  - Allowing the Minister to appoint upper-tier council heads of council with strong chair powers that mirror strong mayor powers
  - Reduce Simcoe County Council from 32 to 17 members, and Niagara Regional Council from 32 to 13 members with both councils composed of the mayors of each lower-tier municipality plus the appointed head-of-council
  - Require all regional governments except Niagara to review their council composition following the 2026 municipal election
  - Develop a weighted voting framework for Niagara Regional Council
- Bill 100 signals the Province’s intent to modernize regional governance, with a focus on housing delivery and infrastructure alignment.
- Proposed strong chair powers and potential provincial appointments raise concerns about reduced local accountability and democratic decision-making.
- Administration is looking to gather and consolidate municipal input on Bill 100 (*Better Regional Governance Act, 2026*) in order to prepare and submit formal comments to the Province, ensuring local priorities, concerns, and governance principles are clearly represented in the consultation process.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That, Recommendation Report LLS-04-2026 titled “Regional Governance Review – Bill 100 (Better Regional Governance Act, 2026)” dated April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026 be received; and,
2. That, Council provide direction to administration on the municipality’s position regarding Bill 100 to inform a submission to the Province.

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

### **Theme # 2 & 5**

- Champion – strategic and responsible growth
- Advance – organizational capacity and effectiveness

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Province of Ontario has introduced Bill 100 as part of a broader effort to modernize regional governance and better align municipal structures with provincial priorities related to housing and infrastructure delivery.

Municipalities within Niagara Region have been actively engaged in governance reform discussions, including local initiatives such as reviews of council size and broader examinations of service delivery and governance structures.

## **CURRENT SITUATION:**

Bill 100 proposes significant restructuring of upper-tier municipal governance across Ontario, with most changes anticipated to take effect following the 2026 municipal election. Although the legislation does not explicitly mandate municipal amalgamation, it remains unclear how the introduction of a provincially appointed “strong chair” model may influence future structural changes, including the potential for consolidation.

The Province has indicated that the intent of the legislation is to accelerate decision-making, reduce governance costs through the elimination of part-time elected councillors, and better align municipal actions with provincial priorities, particularly in the areas of housing and infrastructure.

At present, Bill 100 has passed First Reading and is under consideration at Second Reading at Queen’s Park.

## **Core Structural Changes**

Bill 100 introduces several fundamental changes to upper-tier governance. The legislation would authorize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appoint and remove heads of council, including regional chairs and wardens, in designated upper-tier municipalities such as Durham, Halton, Muskoka, Niagara, Peel, Waterloo, York, and Simcoe. In instances where the Minister does not make an appointment, councils would retain the ability to appoint a chair internally. This approach effectively replaces or overrides the direct election of regional chairs in these jurisdictions.

In addition, the legislation introduces “strong chair” powers, granting appointed chairs enhanced executive authority similar to the Province’s strong mayor framework. These powers are intended to accelerate housing approvals, streamline infrastructure-related decision-making, and improve alignment with provincial priorities. Under this model, it is possible that an unelected, provincially appointed chair could override decisions made by directly elected mayors within Niagara Region.

The legislation also proposes a significant restructuring of regional councils. In Niagara Region, council composition would be reduced from approximately 32 members to 13, consisting of the 12 local mayors and the regional chair. A similar restructuring is proposed for Simcoe County, where council would be reduced from 32 to 17 members.

Bill 100 further enables the Province to establish weighted voting systems for upper-tier councils. This would allow certain members to hold more than one vote, with voting power potentially allocated based on population or other criteria. However, the specific details of how weighted voting would be implemented are expected to be defined through regulation following Royal Assent, and remain unclear at this time. Without this clarity on weighted voting, the real impacts of this new governance regime can not be fully understood and may have significant implications for West Lincoln at the regional table.

The legislation also requires upper-tier municipalities to undertake reviews of council composition following the 2026 municipal election. Niagara Region is subject to a modified timeline, with its first required review scheduled after 2034 and subsequent reviews every second election thereafter. It is further unclear whether strong chair powers would be able to override council composition decisions made by the Council itself.

In terms of election-related provisions, amendments to the Municipal Elections Act may result in certain nominations for regional chair positions being voided or withdrawn to reflect the transition away from elected regional leadership.

### **Local Governance Initiatives**

In parallel with provincial action, Niagara Regional Council initiated a comprehensive governance and service delivery review in February 2026. This reflects a broader regional commitment to proactively examining how services are structured and delivered.

As part of this work, there has been ongoing consideration of alternative service delivery models, including publicly owned water and wastewater corporations and locally governed public service boards responsible for services such as regional roads, public health, and emergency services. These efforts demonstrate that governance reform is already actively underway within Niagara, independent of provincial direction.

### **Implications**

Bill 100 represents a significant shift away from a local democratically elected regional leadership model toward a provincially influenced and appointed executive structure. While the Province has indicated that these changes will reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and accelerate housing delivery, there is limited publicly available data to substantiate these outcomes.

The proposed framework suggests a more centralized decision-making model that may enable faster outcomes, but with reduced opportunity for deliberation among elected representatives. The introduction of strong chair powers, particularly when combined with provincial appointment authority, raises important questions regarding the balance

between efficiency and democratic accountability.

The reduction in council size would also result in decreased representation at the regional level, while the introduction of weighted voting introduces additional uncertainty regarding how influence will be distributed among municipalities of varying size. Until further details are provided through regulation, the full impact of these changes remains difficult to assess.

Collectively, these elements raise broader considerations regarding local autonomy, the concentration of decision-making authority, and the preservation of meaningful municipal representation within regional governance structures.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Further analysis will be required as additional details are released by the Province, particularly to fully assess the financial, operational, and governance implications of the proposed changes and their potential impact on municipal responsibilities and service delivery.

**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:**

Governance review remains an ongoing and active area of discussion at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) level, reflecting its importance across all municipal functions. SLT is regularly engaged in monitoring developments related to Bill 100 and broader regional governance reform, ensuring that the organization remains informed and responsive as the legislative and policy landscape evolves. This continuous engagement ensures that the municipality is well-positioned to respond effectively and contribute meaningfully to the broader conversation on governance reform.

**CONCLUSION:**

Bill 100 represents a significant structural reform to regional governance in Ontario by centralizing authority within upper-tier municipalities, empowering provincially appointed leadership, and reducing the size and autonomy of regional councils.

While the legislation is intended to streamline decision-making and better align municipal actions with provincial priorities, it also introduces substantial changes to governance structures, representation, and accountability. Continued monitoring and engagement will be essential to ensure that municipal perspectives are clearly communicated as the Province advances the legislation and develops the supporting regulatory framework.

**Prepared & Submitted by:**

**Approved by:**

**Jessica Dyson**  
**Director, Legal and Legislative Services**

**Truper McBride**  
**CAO**